

Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Partnership



Above: Urban Waters partners collaborate on a variety of projects to restore urban waters and revitalize our communities

Lake Michigan Watershed Webinar series
November 4, 2020

Agenda for Today's Webinar

- What is the Urban Waters Federal Partnership?
- History of Urban Waters in Northwest Indiana
- What is the annual work plan and how is it used?
- Key NWI Urban Waters initiatives
- What is the role of the NWI Urban Waters Coordinator?

What Is Urban Waters?

- An national initiative to encourage federal agencies to work more effectively and efficiently with each other
- Engage local communities as full partners in restoring and protecting their waterways
- Focus on restoring urban waterways and revitalizing communities



USFS and the Student Conservation Association demonstrate tree planting

Guiding Principles

- Promote clean urban waters.
- Reconnect people to their waterways.
- Encourage water conservation.
- Be open and honest, listen to communities.
- Focus on measuring results and evaluation to fuel future success.
- Emphasize urban water systems as a way to promote economic revitalization and prosperity.
- Encourage community improvements through active partnerships.



URBANWATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities.

Partner Agencies

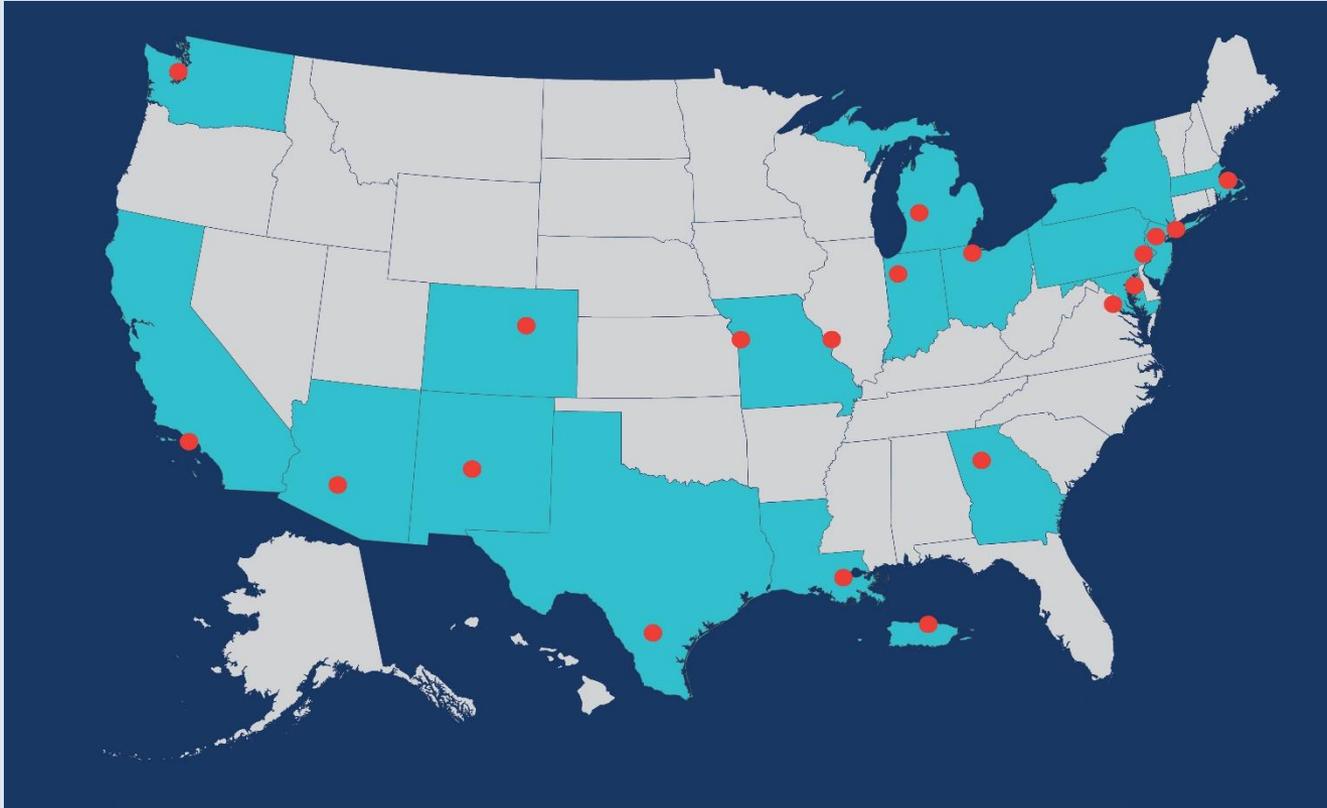
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Corporation for National and Community Service
- Department of Agriculture (Forest Service and NRCS)
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy
- Department of the Army, Army Corps of Engineers
- Department of Homeland Security (FEMA)
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Interior (USGS, FWS, and NPS)
- Department of Transportation
- Economic Development Administration
- Environmental Protection Agency
- National Institutes of Health
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
- Department of Treasury - Community Development Financial Institutions Fund



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SERVICE** 



Twenty Locations in 2020



Map of the current Urban Waters pilot locations as of 2020 (USEPA)

People's Choice Sammie Award

- Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal – People's Choice



Members of the Urban Waters Team- left to right: Roy Simon - EPA, Ryan Nichols - DOI, Surabhi Shah - EPA, Mike Shapiro - EPA, Lisa Pelstring - DOI, and Morgan Grove - USDA Forest Service.

Northwest Indiana Location



Map of Northwest Indiana watersheds and waterways (Save the Dunes)

Northwest Indiana location

- Original UWFP pilot location in 2011
- Co-led by EPA, USFS, and NPS
- Over 80 federal, state, and local partners
- Ambassador housed at Purdue Northwest (PNW)



NWI residents and visitors enjoy Lake Michigan at Whihala Beach (Eric Allix Rogers, [Flickr](#)).

The NWI Urban Waters Work Plan

- Developed with partner input
- Drafted by Ambassador, reviewed/modified by partners
- Previous year accomplishments
- Key projects that advance UW goals in NWI
 - Some directly initiated by UW
 - Some driven by local partners with UW in support role.



Northwest Indiana (NWI) 2020 Work Plan & 2019 Accomplishments

Executive Summary

Since 2011, the Urban Waters - Northwest Indiana (NWI) Partnership has been working to protect, restore, and revitalize urban waterways in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties. 2019 was a banner year for the Partnership with substantial achievements on key initiatives! Highlights include:

- CommuniTree partners planted over 2,000 trees and engaged 500+ volunteers.
- More than 6,000 students and residents learned about local waterways and natural resources as part of **partners'** watershed education programs, which featured paddling with Canoemobile.
- Local partners secured nearly \$3 million in grants to advance green infrastructure and streambank stabilization projects that will restore urban waters and revitalize communities.
- The Septic System Coordinated Working Group helped train residents to be septic system ambassadors in their neighborhoods and began sampling for a microbial source tracking study.
- Urban Waters partners offered hands-on workshops on paddling safety, tree pruning, and tree care and helped to pilot the Master Watershed Steward Program.



NWI Urban Waters partners are collaborating on a variety of initiatives to protect and restore local waterways.

Developed with input from NWI Urban Waters partners, this work plan highlights key projects that advance Urban Waters goals in NWI. Some projects are directly initiated by Urban Waters, and many others are driven by local partners with Urban Waters playing a supporting role. This work plan also identifies tasks for moving existing and new initiatives forward in 2020. Contact Jennifer Birchfield at jbirchfield@pnw.edu with suggestions or requests for assistance.

COVID-19 Update

This work plan was developed before COVID-19 and associated social distancing. As such, planned projects requiring in-person gatherings or work crews may be modified or delayed.

1 June 5, 2020

The 2020 NWI Urban Waters work plan. Available at
www.epa.gov/urbanwaters

Why is the Work Plan Important?

- Developed annually with partner input
- Communicates our priorities to UW leadership at the federal level
- Gives the “core team” (ambassador, USFS, NPS, EPA) direction on focus and activities
- When resources and opportunities become available, the first place we look is the work plan and project lists
- Helps us keep an eye out for grants, assistance and other opportunities

Key Initiatives

- Public accessibility
- Watershed education
- Septic Systems
- CommuniTree
- Supporting local watershed efforts



Public Accessibility



Construction of the ADA launch on Trail Creek – the first in the state - in 2015 (Trail Creek Watershed Partnership)

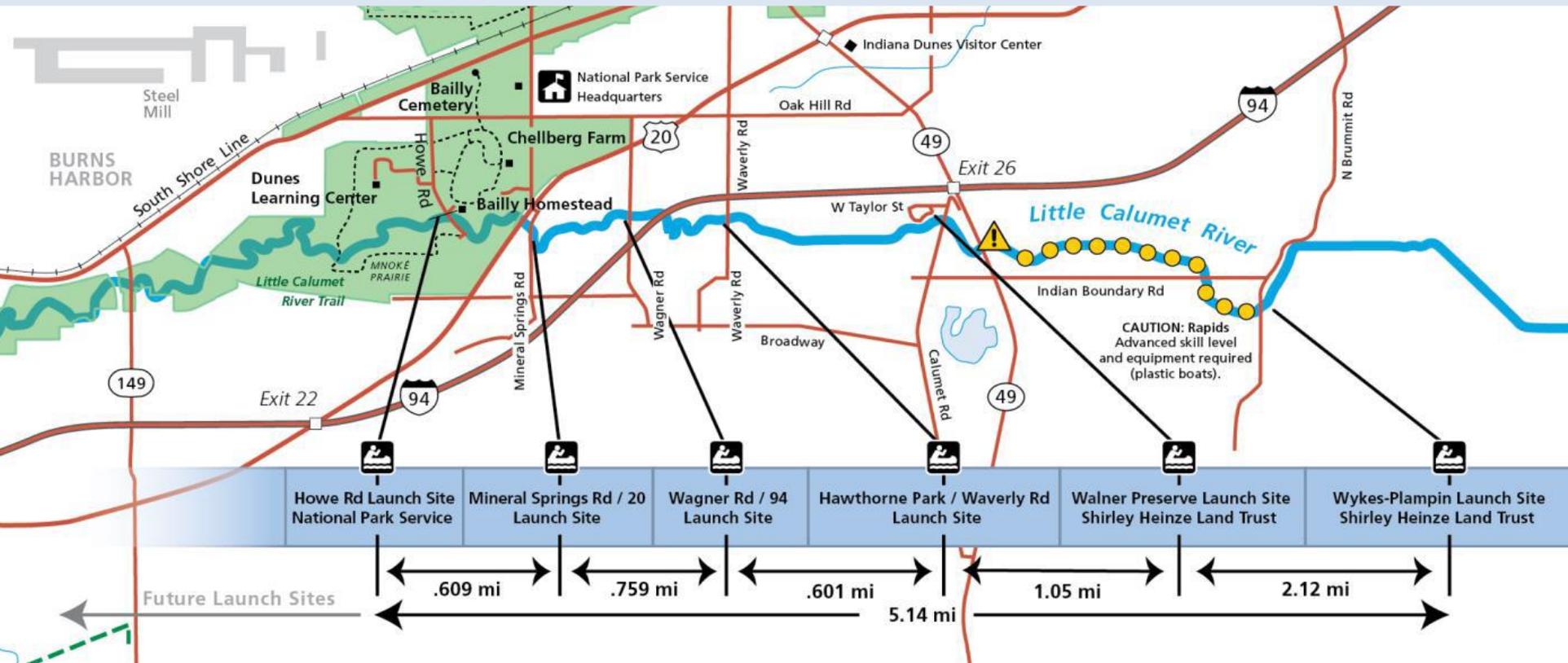


ADA-compliant launch installed at Veteran's Park on Deep River in Lake Station in 2018 (Dunes Learning Center)

Since 2011 eight canoe/kayak launches have been installed on five waterways across NWI, six of which are ADA-compliant!

Public Accessibility

- Partners worked to develop the NPS River Use and Management Plan allowing paddling on the Little Calumet River in Indiana Dunes National Park



Little Calumet River East Branch Water Trail (NPS)

Public Accessibility



NWI partners participated in paddlesports safety trainings hosted by Urban Waters and NPS (NPS)



Students learn about water safety with NPS at a ParKids event at West Beach (NPS).

Watershed Education

- In 2012, LaPorte County SWCD first hosted Wilderness Inquiry's "Canoemobile"
- In 2019 over 6,000 participated in watershed education and paddling events coordinated by LaPorte Co. SWCD and Dunes Learning Center.



Students paddle on local waterways throughout Northwest Indiana (Dunes Learning Center, Wilderness Inquiry)



Watershed Education

- Urban Waters and local partners host educational stations on water quality, forestry, fisheries, and more
- NPS and a 5 Star-Urban Waters grant partially funded Canoemobile 2019



USEPA Biologist, Peg Donnelley helps students assess Trail Creek water quality.



Urban Waters Coordinator, Jen Birchfield helps students identify benthic macroinvertebrates (LaPorte County SWCD)

Watershed Education

- Developed by Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant (IISG) with Urban Waters and partners contributing modules
- Piloted in 2019



A Master Watershed Steward learns about soil (IISG)



Volunteers clean a beach as part of a clean-up organized by a Master Watershed Steward (David Klein)

Septic Systems

- IDNR- Lake Michigan Coastal Program led Septic System Working Group
- Previous Ambassador studied septic system messaging
- Save the Dunes and LMCP developed the Good Neighbor outreach campaign and Neighborhood Ambassador Program
- Mapping septic systems with NIRPC
- Microbial source tracking with Indiana University Northwest



The Northwest Indiana for Healthy Septic Systems logo developed by Save the Dunes, LMCP, and partners.



Partners distribute “Good Neighbor” yard signs (LMCP)

CommuniTree

- Outgrowth of an Urban Waters partner request for urban forestry support
- Alliance of businesses, not-for-profits, universities, and government agencies working to create a more diverse, healthy, and sustainable urban forest across northwest Indiana.



CommuniTree logo developed with NIPSCO



NIPRC-administered CommuniTree grants



SCA Tree Team planting, maintenance, and engagement with help from USFS



Wildlife Habitat Council plantings with industry (WHC)

CommuniTree

- Workshops:
 - Tree planting/maintenance
 - Inventories
 - Ordinances
 - Pruning
 - IDNR Tree Steward
- USFS facilitated development of CommuniTree Work Plan
- Social media campaign and community engagement plan underway



Workshop attendees practice using tree inventory software

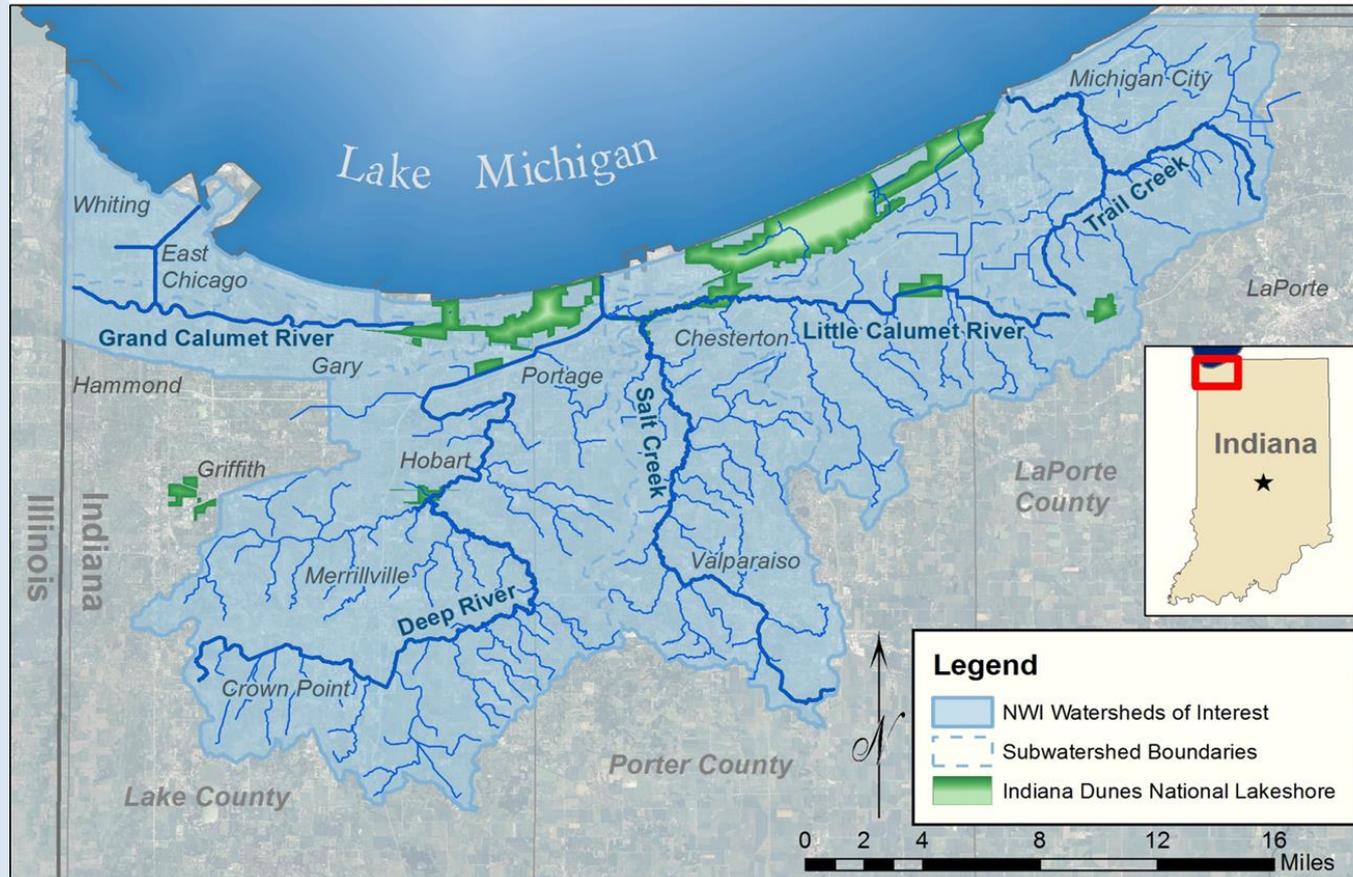
CommuniTree

Since 2016, CommuniTree partners have

- Planted nearly 6,000 Trees
- Engaged over 2,000 volunteers
- Trained 20 youth in urban forestry
- Worked with over 40 communities
- Held 10 trainings on forestry topics

Watershed Management

Efforts to protect and improve waterways in NWI are generally led by local watershed groups with UW supporting.



IDEM-approved watershed plans in the Lake Michigan basin can be found on IDEM's LAMP page at: www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/2531.htm

Federal Partners support watershed groups in various ways

- **USGS** water quality monitoring
 - Monitoring green infrastructure
 - Bacterial monitoring and source tracking
 - Real-time monitoring and gauges
- **ACOE** restoration projects
- **NRCS** agricultural programs



USGS monitoring equipment at a rain garden installed at Gary City Hall

Grand Calumet R. Area of Concern

- One of the most heavily industrialized areas of the country
- Designated as an Area of Concern (AOC) under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1987, largely due to legacy pollutants.
- Many partners working with IDEM, EPA, USACOE to restore the Grand Calumet River AOC
- AOC Success:
 - Completed 4 large GLLA sediment remediation projects
 - Work for 4 habitat restoration management actions underway
 - Working to complete all management actions by 2024

Jeorse Park

- Once considered the most polluted beach in the country with up to 70% closure rate
- USGS microbial source tracking
- ACOE/Michigan State University modeling of breakwater modification
- ACOE habitat restoration at Jeorse Park Beach
- IDEM gull program with EPA support



Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Concepcion,
Chicago District U.S.ACE



Habitat restoration at Jeorse Park Beach

Deep River Watershed

- Watershed Management Plan led by Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission
 - 319 implementation
 - Dam modification
- Hobart completed GLRI-funded project to install GI: rain gardens, pervious pavement, bioswales, native plantings, riparian restoration



Above: A rain garden installed in the City of Hobart (Hobart)



Above: A dam on Deep River (NIRPC)

East Branch of the Little Calumet R.

- Watershed Management Plan led by Save the Dunes
- Land acquisition and corridor restoration by Shirley Heinze Land Trust and others
- Paddling Association working to open and maintain water trail
- SHLT and partners worked with USFS & Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science on climate adaptation
 - Hosted webinar available on SHLT YouTube channel



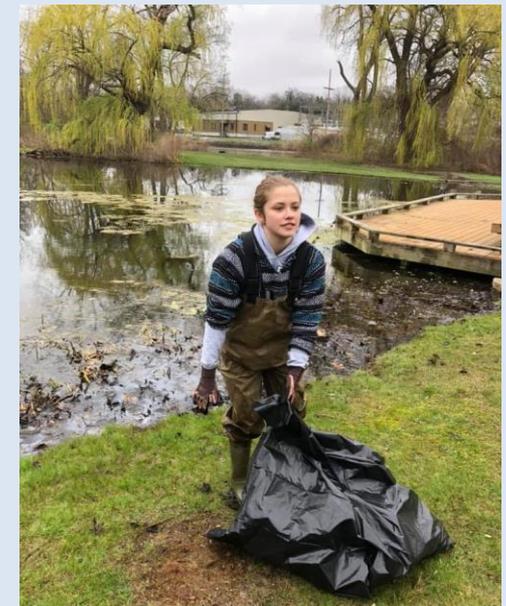
Porter County Izaak Walton League opened the Carol Cook Wetland Overlook, a unit of the Little Calumet Conservation Area.



THE POWER OF OUR NETWORK



TCWP partners tour remediation underway at the Karwick Nature Park with MCSD.



A MCHS Wolves Environmental Restoration Team member removes invasive species.

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



Role of the UW Coordinator

- Facilitate collaborative work plan development and implementation
- Communicate local needs and projects to federal partners
- Connect partners to federal opportunities and resources
 - In 2019 partners secured over \$2.8 million in grants (UW directly assisted in >\$600,000)
- Celebrate partnership successes



UW partner, Lisa Harris, attended a Green Infrastructure certification training with a scholarship funded by USFS.

Role of the UW Coordinator

- Monthly e-news to 480 subscribers
- Special opportunity alerts as needed
- Meeting reminders, project updates, funding and learning opportunities and resources

It's easy to join the NWI
Urban Waters list!

Just send your email address
by text message:

Text

URBANWATERS
to **22828** to get started.



Message and data rates may apply.

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